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SUBJECT: TWO YEARS ON: STRUCTURING USAU TO MEET THE
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE FUTURE

11. SUMMARY: The United States Mission to the African Union (USAU) has the opportunity to play a much more influential role in the deliberations and actions of the African Union (AU) in 2009 and beyond than it has had since its establishment as an observer mission in 2006. Both the AU Commission (AUC) and its donor partners see the US as a critical player in building AU capacity and supporting AU objectives. To live up to the part, USAU requires staffing and program funding appropriate to engage the AUC across a broad range of issues and on a long-term, sustained basis. Following is an assessment from the outgoing Ambassador of the immediate and mid-range staffing and resource needs of the USAU in the current environment. END SUMMARY.

An Opportunity for USAU

12. The United States Government established the USAU in December 2006. Its staffing called for just two reporting officers, including the Ambassador, with the thought that the Mission would largely replicate observation activities previously conducted by the bilateral mission. The Mission structure did not envisage program management or intensive diplomatic engagement with the many players) AUC officials, AU members, donor partners, the many disparate organs of the AU) intrinsic to AU policymaking.

13. As the AU has become an increasingly indispensable institution in the political, social, and economic affairs of the continent, its need to upgrade its institutional capabilities has increased dramatically. Moreover, with the AU at the center of most major issues on the Continent, it requires critical political support both within Africa and on the international stage.

14. To address these issues, many donors have stepped up with significant investment programs for the AU, including the EU, which has pledged 55 million Euros to develop the AU,s management capacity and 300 million Euros to support a peace and security facility. To manage these programs, the EU has a dedicated mission with 25 staff, growing to 40 by 2010. Other donors focus on specific aspects of the AU,s institutional building plan, as the UK has done with the Africa Stand-by Force (ASF). Many, including China and Turkey, have sought to establish strategic partnerships with the AU, with regularly scheduled annual high-level dialogues.

15. The US does not offer the AU resources of a similar scale, given our penchant for bilateral funding. The USAU Mission is small. Yet both the AU and the donor community see the US as a critical player in developing AU capacity. As the major investor on the continent in development, security, and social affairs, US support for AU positions can dramatically impact their implementation in the field. The broad US presence on the continent offers the AU and donor community access to unique sources of information and influence. US leverage with international institutions can enhance the AU,s stature globally. Last, but not least, the US reputation on the continent, burnished by respect for US democracy and free markets, the strong financial and political commitment of the USG to Africa in recent years, the education and training of many AU staff and permanent representatives at US institutions, and the recent election

of President Obama, gives the US an unparalleled standing with the AU leadership and members. The establishment of the USAU, one of only two observer missions dedicated solely to the AU (the EU is the other), capitalized on these strengths and reinforced the US stature within the organization and with the donor community.

Short-term Response and Long-term Engagement

¶6. Taking advantage of this role requires a fundamental change in how USAU does business. At this time much of the work of the USAU is in response to crises on the Continent at the expense of long term engagement in systemic issues. Today, these are Somalia, Eastern Congo, Guinea, Mauritania, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. Tomorrow they could be six different countries. USAU recognizes it must put a high priority on influencing AU response to these crisis situations. However, to realize the opportunity USAU has to help the AU fulfill its vision for a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous continent, USAU must balance the need to address short-term crises with a plan for long-term engagement and must have the resources and personnel for the task. Not only is such engagement necessary for the AU to have the capability it requires, but only through such engagement will USAU build the relationships it needs to have influence on a day-to-day basis. This engagement must be cognizant of both the priorities of the AU leadership and the comparative advantages the US has to offer. USAU's main asset is its ability to leverage in a multilateral forum the large US bilateral investment and presence on the continent.

Key Priorities for the AU and USAU

¶7. The AUC leadership has clearly stated its areas of focus: institution strengthening, peace and security, shared values (i.e., democracy and governance), and development, cooperation, and regional integration (i.e., socio-economic development). These areas align closely with US strategic objectives for the continent as articulated in the NSC approved Africa Strategy (NSPD-50). Within these areas, USAU has identified a defined set of priorities that leverage USG strengths and are most likely to advance US foreign policy goals. The key priorities identified by the USAU are:

Institutional Strengthening

- Financial Management and Procurement
- Staff Training and Education
- Communications and Information Management

Peace and Security

- Peace Operations
- Engagement with the Peace and Security Council (PSC)
- Maritime Security
- Peace and Security Architecture/ Africa Stand-by Force

Shared Values - Democracy and Governance

- Election Assistance and Monitoring (e.g. Support for the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit (DEAU))
- African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)
- Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance

Development, Cooperation, and Regional Integration)

Socio-Economic Development

- HIV/AIDS Action Plan
- Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Plan (CAADP)
- Trade and Investment
- Education Action Plan/ Gender Action Plan

Planning for Success: Staffing

¶8. To address these priorities, USAU staff needs to have the time to regularly interface with other missions and programs on the continent to understand their activities. At the same time, USAU staff needs to work consistently with the

different AUC departments to demonstrate US commitment to the broad array of challenges on the continent. As it is now, given personnel constraints, neither of these occurs at sufficient levels.

¶9. Current staffing at USAU stands at seven US and four local personnel. It includes an Ambassador, a Political/ Economic Officer, Public Affairs Officer, an Office Management Specialist, a USAID Development Liaison, an AFRICOM Military Liaison (supported by an EFM administrative assistant), a CJTF-HOA Military Liaison, an FSN Protocol Assistant, an FSN receptionist, and two FSN drivers. USAU also benefits from two contractors the USG has placed at the AU) one in the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit (DEAU) and one with the Strategic Planning and Management Unit (SPMU). These contractors provide double value to the US: they help build the capacity of the AU areas critical to US objectives and they provide USAU with key insights into the deliberations and dynamics of the AUC.

¶10. With respect to the priorities identified above, the Political/ Economic Officer must focus almost all his attention on engagement with the PSC and Peace and Security Department (PSD) with regard to the many political crises the AU is addressing. As the only State Foreign Service Officer, he also backstops the Ambassador on management issues. Aside from necessary public diplomacy activities, the Public Affairs Officer works with the AU on communications, including a project to digitalize the AU's Archives, and staff development through the international visitors and speakers programs. She also provides support on macro-economic and economic growth issues. The USAID Development Liaison Officer must manage projects (i.e., Continental Early Warning System, the DEAU contract, and Preventive Diplomacy) and relationships across several departments, including Political Affairs, Social Affairs, Conflict Management, and Rural Economy and Agriculture. She also is responsible for advising the Ambassador on Social and Development issues and identifying possible important windows of opportunities for USAID funding. The AFRICOM Military Liaison, aside from being the Ambassador's senior military advisor, has lead on our support for AU field operations and the development of the AU Peace and Security Architecture. The CJTF-HOA Military Liaison has the lead on Maritime Security and Title XXII program management, which includes projects like High Frequency and Satellite Communications that support the ASF. Both officers must also work actively to identify opportunities for US military security cooperation with the AU and its subordinate Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The Office Management Specialist manages the administrative functions of the office, with support from the FSNs. The protocol assistant is key to facilitating engagement with the AU Commission and wider diplomatic community.

¶11. This staffing plan leaves out several key priorities. In terms of Institutional Strengthening, USAU can do little on the critical financial management and procurement gap at the AU. On Peace and Security, where the vast majority of our focus is, our efforts still tend towards the short-term crises versus the long-term capacity building. In the area of Shared Values, we are not active in supporting the APRM or implementation of many of the political protocols and conventions the AU has sponsored, such as the Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance. In Development, Cooperation, and Regional Integration, USAU can only provide cursory coverage. In-depth engagement in areas where the US has large investments on the continent - including health, rural development, education, gender, infrastructure, and trade and investment - does not occur.

¶12. To address these shortfalls, USAU proposes adding one experienced mid-level Foreign Service Officer, preferably from the economic cone, and one junior Foreign Service Officer. This would allow the senior political officer to become a Deputy Chief of Mission in name, as well as in practice. This officer would continue to focus most of his/her energy on engagement with the PSC, but also be

responsible for coordinating the activities of the other agencies and staff in the Mission. The second mid-level Foreign Service officer would be responsible for engagement with the other seven AU departments aside from Peace and Security. In particular, this officer would support the AU as it addresses economic development issues on the continent, including infrastructure, trade, and investment. Given the breadth of this range of responsibilities, and the urgency of the issues the DCM would be dealing with in the area of Peace and Security, both would require part-time support from a junior officer. The junior officer would give the DCM the opportunity to address long-term structural issues as well as current crises and give the USAU the opportunity to engage on the APRM and implementation of AU protocols and conventions.

¶13. In addition, to buttress the efforts of the current USAID Liaison Officer, USAU would seek support from CDC or USAID for a Health Attache/Liaison, a position that was envisioned in the 2006 planning for USAU but never funded. Such a person could work with the AU on implementing its HIV/AIDS Action Plan, as well as its work to develop systems to fight pandemics and its overall efforts to promote the modernization of Africa's health systems. A key responsibility of this position would be to seek to ensure AU health policy complements the massive investment the USG is making in this sector, and vice versa. Once the health sector and much of the economic areas are covered, the USAID Development Liaison would be able to address the financial and procurement system capacity building so desperately needed at the AU, as well as non-health related social issues such as gender, education and rural development.

¶14. With these three additional positions, the USAU will no longer need to sacrifice the important for the urgent. This does not mean USAU will cover every item of interest to the USG, but much less will fall through the cracks. Understanding that budget and space constraints in both the current USAU office and in the New Embassy Compound may limit the ability of USAU to obtain all of the staffing requested above, USAU could accept a potential reduction in the PAO position implied by the current freeze on that position. This is by no means ideal, but with the economic issues being covered by a new mid-level foreign service officer, the public diplomacy work could, if absolutely necessary, be supported by a dedicated foreign service national in the bilateral public affairs office. This assumes significant support from the bilateral PAO so that areas that have been high-profile successes for USAU in 2008) International Visitors, Speaker Programs, and Communications Training) are not put at risk. Despite space constraints, shoe-horning this level of staffing into the NEC is in the realm of the possible.

Planning for Success: Program and Administrative Budget

¶15. The USAU currently has no program funding of its own. It has managed some program funds provided through it from State and USAID Africa Bureaus regional funds. In the Secretary's proposed FY2010 budget, USAU would receive its own line item of \$1.5 million to support DEAU, CMD, the Panel of the Wise, and the Continental Early Warning System. While a major positive step, this pales in comparison to the direct financial support provided by other missions. USAU does not expect to approach such levels, but it does require some additional funding flexible enough to be applied opportunistically. For instance, if USAU could invest small amounts to upgrade the AU Financial Management System, this could unlock tens of millions of dollars from other donors who have allocated funding to the AU, but not expended it due to the AU's lack of financial accountability systems. In addition, the USAU could make very good use of IMET and FMF funding. In particular, the AU would view access to the IMET program for its staff as a major benefit that both builds current capacity and can enhance its potential to recruit high quality military personnel to staff its Peace and Security Commission and its Missions Administration.

¶16. With regard to administrative and representational funds, USAU does not have dedicated funding for these expenses either, but must rely on the bilateral mission's limited resources. The result shortchanges both missions and is inefficient, as neither has full responsibility for its own spending. USAU needs dedicated administrative and representational funds.

Challenges and Opportunity

¶17. Achieving the above goals will not be easy. As a non-member, USAU has to proactively work to ensure it has access to the information necessary to inform US foreign policy. The AU's own thin capacity is a major impediment. USAU often finds key AU staff unavailable, the decision-making cycle inordinately long, and the process for implementing a decision agonizing. When one Commissioner was asked how he avoided having his department become over-committed, he said this was not an issue since we have outstripped our capacity a long time ago.⁸

¶18. Despite these obstacles, USAU is confident that with the right support it can take advantage of the window of opportunity that exists for the United States to help the AU's capacity catch up with its commitments. If it does, the AU will be a viable multilateral institution even more in demand, helping not only resolve the continent's crises of today, but setting the course for the Africa of tomorrow. This will require even more robust engagement by the USG, with technical expertise in the many areas where the AU will be increasingly active, including environment, education, and law enforcement, as well conflict resolution, security, and the many sub-regions of the continent. While this may be several years in the future, the USG should plan a USAU equal to the task supporting US interests within the premier multilateral organization of the continent, the 53-member African Union. END TEXT.

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